



December 9, 2011 - Florida Keys - Elizabeth Davis: Dear Editor: This is the time of the year we are supposed to be “jolly”. But, there really is nothing jolly about. In fact, I think that this time of the year is one of the hardest – no, not for humans – but for animals either dumped at shelters only to be euthanized or dumped on the side of a road to defend for themselves. This time of the year you hear people talk about making donations towards food banks, providing a home for a homeless person or family in need for the holidays or donating money to events benefiting “humans in need”. But nobody seems to bother to actually wanting to help their local animal shelter or rescue by providing food or a temporary foster home for a pet in need.



I admire the colony care-takers/ feeders who no matter what the weather is like and no matter if bright and early in the morning or late at night are out there feeding and caring for the felines dumped, ignored and neglected by people who used to call themselves “cat owners”. These care-takes and feeders are mainly Florida Keys residents with not much money in their pockets and barely able to pay their bills. Yet, they would give their last penny to help a cat in need.

Instead of donating a bag of food or say “thank you for taking care of these felines”, people call those feeders names, report them to the sheriff office and Fish & Wildlife Officers as nuisance or even take their matters in their own hands by poisoning these cats. Yes, you heard right. There are people out there who kill cats – just for the fun of it or because they do not like cats. For example, let's mention 68 years old Kenneth Ellis from Naples who came to the Florida Keys a few weeks ago to spend some time at the Ocean Point Condos in Tavernier. For no reason he killed a 5 weeks young kitten with an airsoft rifle. The kitten, its sibling and their mother were hanging out on the property doing nothing but just walking around and Ellis pointed his gun at one of the kittens and shot it. Ellis was taken to the Stock Island Jail only to get release the next day WITHOUT charges! That guy was set free and of course, left the Keys. What the heck?



Getting away from the cats for a moment, what about the guy Marino Sanchez who killed a few weeks old puppy in Marathon a few months ago? He was taken to jail and his hearing was rescheduled a couple of times. Or that Noah guy who badly abused and did beat a dog the community named “Buddy” last year. Buddy had a long recovery and found a wonderful home. However, his abuser's hearing date was rescheduled numerous times.

Excuse me? I thought Florida Keys has strict laws against animal cruelty yet they do not take it serious if someone kills and abuses a cat or dog? What is wrong with our judges and law enforcement. It seems like our judges in the Florida Keys seem to forget that no matter how many times they were elected, many people who elected them are animal lovers and advocates and they will think twice who they will re-elect again once election time comes up again.

Another sad fact is that there are many feral and stray cats that get poisoned and if their care-takers and feeders report it to the Sheriff they get turned down with the comment that there is not much that can be done. Again, excuse me? Isn't our law enforcement supposed to follow through with the laws and punishments against animal killers and abusers? What sample do they set to let these people go free.

Getting back to the “greedy” people. I always want to smack people in the face who tell someone who spend lots of money on vet bills that they just should have “put down the pet” instead of wasting money. Again, what the heck? Many cat owners consider their pet “children in fur” and no matter how tough their financial situation is, they will give their last penny or fall behind in bills only to make sure their four-legged child is taken care of. I really want to climb up a palm tree when I come across the people who support and donate towards human related benefits and events but put their noses up in their air or turn their back if they are asked to help out an animal related cause or claim that they do not have any money available right now.

I always thought people here in the Keys are different. I used to come here for vacation before moving down here and was always amazed to see businesses supporting their local shelters and rescues. I always thought what a wonderful place the Florida Keys would be for an animal lover – especially cats – like me. But, I learned pretty quick how wrong

I was. I learned one thing for sure – the majority of Florida Keys residents just do not like cats! And it is a shame because if you ask someone what comes to their mind if they hear Florida Keys they say “Ernest Hemingway – Cats” and automatically assume that the Florida Keys is one of the most cat loving places on earth. Yeah right, wake up call...unfortunately it is not all that true. If at least people would admit the fact instead of acting like they care so much about felines. I also realized that the people with less money are the ones who care more about a cat in need and would give their last dime compared to the people with pockets full of money.

Well, if you really care for felines or would like to make a difference for the many homeless, stray and abandoned cats in the Florida Keys, consider picking up a bag or two of cat food during your next grocery shopping day and donate to one of the local rescue groups or to one of the dedicated colony care-takers and feeders. In fact, I believe that Caring for Cats started something like a food drive and put up donation bins at various business throughout the Upper Keys and Forgotten Felines is planning to do the same in the Marathon area. Whoever these businesses are putting up these food donation bins – THANK YOU for your support. There is nothing more rewarding and special if you know that you were able to help a creature not able to speak for itself. I hope you all have a blessed holiday season and a good start for 2012.

Elizabeth Davis, Key Largo, FL

